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GOOGLE TRIMS ITS TOP TEAM BY 10% TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Google has cut the number of top management roles by 10% in its push for efficiency, the US firm's CEO Sundar Pichai told staff in a meeting

MOVE TO SIMPLIFY COMPANY STRUCTURE

According to a Business Insider report, Pichai told staff the process to trim the company's top team has been going on for the past two years, adding the larger goal is to simplify the company structure by reducing layers of managers that hinder growth. The report quoting Pichai said the efficiency push included a 10% cut in managers, directors, and vice-presidents

SOME ROLES CHANGED TO NON-MANAGERIAL

- A Google spokesperson said some of those roles were changed to nonmanagerial positions while others were eliminated entirely
- The efficiency push has coincided with AI rivals such as OpenAI unleashing new products that threaten Google's search business
- In 2022, Pichai had said he wanted Google to be 20% more efficient

12,000
NUMBER OF JOBS GOOGLE ELIMINATED IN JANUARY 2023, BIGGEST IN ITS HISTORY

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Firefighters douse the fire at the accident site on the Jaipur-Ajmer Highway | PTI

11 killed, 40 injured as LPG tanker hits truck and explodes

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

AT least 11 people were killed and over 40 others seriously injured when an LPG tanker exploded after colliding with a truck near Bhankrota on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway on Friday morning. Over 20 of the injured suffered more than 50% burns. Sources said they fear the toll could go up as the condition of many of the injured is very serious.

The Bharat Petroleum LPG tanker was going from Ajmer to Jaipur when the accident happened. At around 5:45 am, the tanker was attempting a U-turn near Delhi Public School on the outskirts of Jaipur when another truck rammed into it. Sushant Kumar Singh, deputy general manager (fire and safety) of GAIL India, said five nozzles on the tanker broke in the impact of the collision, releasing liquid LPG all over the area. The leaked gas ignited due to a spark, leading to a massive explosion that left the entire vicinity in flames.

The fire spread across a 300-metre radius, reducing dozens of vehicles to ashes. Among the destroyed vehicles were 29 trucks, two passenger buses, two gas tankers, three cars, three motorcycles, and two pickup vehicles. A nearby pipe factory and a sleeper bus were also severely damaged.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing massive flames that were visible from miles away, trapping many individuals in their vehicles.

Over 30 fire engines were rushed to extinguish the flames. To prevent further escalation, the LPG gas pipeline beneath the highway was shut off.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma visited the injured in hospital. He also announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh each for the families of the deceased and ₹1 lakh each for the injured.

FLAMES ENGULF 300-METRE STRETCH

People reported witnessing flames from nearly 1 km away as thick black smoke filled the sky. The crash initially affected a nearly 300-metre stretch of the highway, leading to a long queue of vehicles. The traffic thickened with time and by afternoon choked the arterial road, leading to diversions

Session ends, discord doesn't

B R Ambedkar issue set to resonate in the forthcoming Delhi and Bihar assembly elections

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE winter session of Parliament, which saw unprecedented clashes between the Opposition and the ruling BJP, came to a close on Friday with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar cautioning the members to maintain dignity and decorum of the Houses.

Both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were adjourned sine die amid protests by the Opposition and treasury benches over the alleged insult to B R Ambedkar and directions by Speaker Om Birla to members against holding protests at any gate of Parliament.

While Lok Sabha's productivity was 57.87% in 20 days, passing four bills, the corresponding figure for the Rajya Sabha was 40.03% in 19 days and the passage of three bills.

The session may perhaps go down in parliamentary history for setting a grim record for several reasons — from an ugly scuffle between the NDA and INDIA bloc members and a no-confidence motion by the Opposition against Upper House chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar to a bitter discourse on Constitution and daily disruption of the House proceedings by both sides — to name a few.

The main highlight of the session — a two-day debate on the 75th year of Constitution snowballed into a major point of confrontation between the BJP and the Congress over Union home minister Amit Shah's comment on Ambedkar in Parliament. During his speech on the Constitution, he said, "It has become the new fashion to say 'Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar'. Had they chanted God's name as many times, they would have found a place in heaven."

The scuffle outside Parliament on Thursday led to an FIR against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi after the BJP filed assault charges against him for causing injury to two of its MPs. With both the Congress and the BJP escalating the issue outside Parliament, it is bound to gain more traction and dominate the narrative in the forthcoming Delhi and Bihar assembly elections.

Most part of the 25 day-long session revolved around two tycoons. While Opposition members demanded a debate on the US indictment of businessman Gautam Adani, the treasury benches sought to counter it with the alleged links between the Gandhi family and US billionaire George Soros.

Battle lines were also drawn over INDIA bloc's impeachment motion against Chairman Dhankhar for his alleged partisan conduct in the House. Though it was rejected by deputy Chairman Harivansh, it was the first time that such a motion was made against an RS presiding officer.

The Lok Sabha also saw the introduction of the important 'One Nation, One Election' legislation, amid fierce protest by the Opposition. But the bill didn't get two-thirds majority at the introduction stage. Subsequently, it was sent to a 39-member JPC for vetting.

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other INDIA bloc MPs during their protest against Home Minister Amit Shah over his remarks on Ambedkar | SHEKHAR YADAV

SPECIAL TEAM OF POLICE TO HANDLE RAHUL CASE

A special team of the Delhi Police is expected to take over the probe into the FIR filed against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly 'assaulting' BJP MPs, sources said. Given the conflicting claims, the team plans to call MPs present during the scuffle to piece together the sequence of events. The police will examine CCTV footage and speak to the injured MPs | P9

MEA ticks off Yunus aide for silly remarks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE government on Friday informed the Lok Sabha that 2,200 cases of violence against Hindus and other minorities were reported from Bangladesh this year up to December 8. Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh gave the information said the Indian High Commission in Dhaka is closely monitoring the situation, adding that New Delhi has raised the issue with Dhaka.

In another development, India has lodged a strong protest with Bangladesh over a now-deleted social media post by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's aide Mahfuz Alam, claiming certain areas of India should be part of Bangladesh. Earlier, he had posted on Facebook a map purportedly showing parts of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam as parts of Bangladesh.

"We would like to remind all concerned to be mindful of their public comments," said Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs.

EXPRESS READ

Caste harassment: FIR against 8 IIM-B officials

BENGALURU: MICO Layout police on Friday registered a case against IIM-Bangalore Director Rishikesh T Krishnan and seven others for caste-based harassment and workplace discrimination. The complaint was registered after an inquiry led by ADGP Arun Chakravarthy of the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement that concluded last month, found evidence of workplace exclusion | P2

Former Haryana CM OP Chautala dies at 89

CHANDIGARH: Om Prakash Chautala, a prominent Jat leader and former Haryana CM whose career was marked by dizzying highs and rockbottom lows, died on Friday. He was 89. He is survived by two sons and three daughters. His wife Sneh Lata passed away over five years ago. An INLD spokesperson said Chautala collapsed in his Gurugram home. He was rushed to a hospital, where he died.

Ravi showed his arrest illegal, release him forthwith, directs Karnataka HC

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court on Friday directed the state police to release BJP MLC CT Ravi, noting that he had, prima facie, made out a case that his arrest is illegal.

"The interim relief as sought by the petitioner is granted. The petitioner is ordered to be released from custody forthwith, subject to the condition that he shall make himself available for investigation before the investigating officer as and when required at all reasonable times," said Justice MG Uma in the interim order passed after hearing the petition filed by Ravi, questioning his arrest.

Ravi was arrested by Belagavi police on Thursday following a complaint filed by Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar in Belagavi under Sections 75 and 79 of BNS on charges of sexual harassment and intention to insult the modesty of a woman for his alleged derogatory remarks and objectionable gestures.

The court said that even if the offence invites punishment of less than three years, the police are required to follow the procedure by issuing a notice under Section 35 of BNS and serving a memo containing grounds and reasons for arrest. P4

BJP MLC CT Ravi has an altercation with police personnel on the road, after he was arrested from Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi, late on Thursday night | EXPRESS

No credible evidence of Ravi's remarks, says Horatti

PRAMODKUMAR VAIDYA @ Hubballi

LEGISLATIVE Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti on Friday said that no credible evidence exists of BJP MLC CT Ravi making alleged derogatory statements against Women and Child Development Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar on Thursday.

Horatti clarified to the media that the alleged statement was made after he adjourned the Council following chaos over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on Dr BR Ambedkar. As the recording was turned off after the adjournment, there is no official record to substantiate the claims and counterclaims made, he added.

Both parties, however, filed complaints with him. Hebbalkar's side alleged that Ravi made the derogatory remarks and four Congress MLCs – Yathindra Siddaramaiah, Bilkis Banu, Umashri and M Nagaraj – heard the insults. Ravi denied using any derogatory terms, claiming instead that Hebbalkar called him a "murderer", while he had merely used the word "frustrate". P4

B'luru to get US Consulate by Jan 2025

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE United States will open a Consulate in the city by January 2025, and US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said that his country is working to fulfil its commitment to open a Consulate in Bengaluru in the said period.

The US had earlier announced plans to establish consulates in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad, Garcetti said during a session hosted by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) in New Delhi.

"We are committed to opening the Consulate in Bengaluru, and we hope to make an announcement soon," he added. He also emphasised the presence of a Foreign Commercial Service office in Bengaluru, which further reinforces the strong economic and diplomatic relationship between India and the US.

The opening addresses a long-standing demand from Bengaluru's citizens. Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya said. He stated, "The people of Bengaluru had to go to Chennai, Hyderabad, or New Delhi to get any US visa-related work done. It used to cost them anywhere between Rs 25,000 and Rs 30,000. Even after having the largest number of students and techies who travel to the US, Bengaluru did not have a Consulate." CONTINUED ON P2

Siddu hits out at Centre for imposing Hindi, discrimination in tax devolution

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mandya

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said the central government is trying to impose Hindi across the country, posing a threat to regional languages like Kannada. Everyone should protest against such imposition of Hindi and save Kannada, he said after inaugurating the 87th Kannada Sahitya Sammelana here. He appealed to Kannadigas to speak and teach Kannada to non-Kannadigas and to save the rich language.

Attacking the Centre over allegedly discriminating against the state in devolution of funds and taxes, he said the central government paid Rs 55,000 crore against Rs 4.5 lakh crore tax collected by the state, affecting its development.

He accused the Centre of imposing higher taxes on the common man and reducing taxes on corporate companies. This has hit the purchasing power of the people, forcing the state government to introduce five guarantees for the benefit of the people, he added. P5

People take out a procession as part of the 87th Kannada Sahitya Sammelana in Mandya on Friday | UDAYA SHANKAR S

WAH CHAI!

Your cuppa is healthy, US food, drug regulator finally agrees

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

WITH the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recognising tea from the Camellia sinensis plant is a healthy beverage, the North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) raised a toast to it.

On December 19, the FDA issued a rule to update the "healthy" nutrient content claim to help consumers identify foods that are particularly useful as the foundation of a diet that is consistent with dietary recommendations.

"Fantastic news for the tea industry," said Peter F Goggi, the president of Tea Association of the USA. "Tea is now officially recognized as a healthy beverage and tea can now claim this descriptor," he added.

Bidyananda Barkakoty, adviser to NETA and former vice chairman of Tea Board of India, too expressed joy. "We are extremely happy to know that tea derived from Camellia sinensis has got this recognition. Research worldwide has found the health benefits of drinking tea," Barkakoty said terming it a "wonder drink".

EXPRESS ILLUSTRATION

The NETA urged the Centre to promote tea as a "healthy, lifestyle and wellness" beverage. Dipanjal Deka, secretary of Tea Association of India, Assam branch, said, "Ours is camellia assamica (Assam bush). I think the recognition is for tea in general. It is a good thing for us. In any case, it is scientifically proven that tea has health benefits," he added.

The FDA in a statement said, "We agree that tea is derived from the plant Camellia sinensis...We previously recognized that green tea is made from Camellia sinensis in our response to a qualified health claim petition regarding the relationship between green tea and certain cancers."

"At this time, we do not have sufficient information to determine whether herbal infusions should automatically qualify for the 'healthy' claim. We, therefore, extend automatic qualification for the 'healthy' claim to tea—derived from Camellia sinensis—and not to herbal infusions."

ZUBAIR
HC STAYS ARREST TILL JANUARY 6

The Allahabad High Court on Friday stayed till January 6 the arrest of Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair in relation to an FIR accusing him of promoting enmity among religious groups. The FIR was lodged last month following a complaint by an associate of controversial priest Yati Narsinghanand.